United Nations S/PV.7912

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7912th meeting
Tuesday, 4 April 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mrs. Haley	(United States of America)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Solíz
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Italy	Mr. Lambertini
	Japan	Mr. Kawamura
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Sadykov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2017/250)

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17-08905 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Expression of thanks to the outgoing President

The President: I should first like to publicly thank the representative of the United Kingdom, who did a fantastic job as President and left us with big shoes to fill; we appreciate his sacrifice and leadership during the past month and congratulate him on a very successful month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2017/250)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Sudan to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Jeremiah Mamabolo, Joint Special Representative for the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/250, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur.

I now give the floor to Mr. Mamabolo.

Mr. Mamabolo: I am grateful for the opportunity to brief the Council on the situation in Darfur for the first time since having been appointed head of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).

The three strategic priorities established by the Security Council in its resolution 2148 (2014) continue to provide a framework within which UNAMID implements its protection-of-civilians mandate, mitigates intercommunal conflicts and mediates between the Government of the Sudan and the non-signatory armed movements.

We continue to work with the Government at all levels in pursuance of this mandate with the full understanding that the primary responsibility for the protection of Sudanese civilians rests with the Government of the Sudan.

The Darfur of today is a very different place from what the region was in 2003, when the armed conflict began, and from that of a year ago. Fighting between the forces of the Government of the Sudan and the main three non-signatory armed movements has considerably diminished.

The Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid al-Nour (SLA/Abdul Wahid) is no longer capable of mounting and sustaining significant military operations and has experienced a series of defections that have left it weakened by defections to the Government side. As a result of the military campaign of the past three years, the Government has been able to take control of every area previously held by the movement in and around its heartland of Jebel Marra, leaving SLA/Abdul Wahid with a few pockets of resistance.

The unilateral ceasefire that was extended by a further six months in January is largely holding. SLA Minni Minawi and the Gibril Ibrahim faction of the Justice and Equality Movement have also declared a ceasefire, with SLA Abdul Wahid consistently refusing to do so.

Against the backdrop of economic hardship and social depression, however, banditry and criminality continue to be widespread. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons feeds those negative phenomena, as does intercommunal violence, which is usually triggered by competition, mostly over land, water, grazing and mineral resources. The efforts of the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel, with the support of UNAMID, to get the parties to the conflict in Darfur to sign a cessation of hostilities agreement and to start direct negotiations towards an inclusive peace agreement to end the conflict have remained inconclusive. The current status is hurting all parties and, most importantly, is not sustainable and can only lead to more bloodshed.

On 8 March, President Al-Bashir issued a decree pardoning 259 rebels captured in the fighting with Government forces, including 66 combatants from

Darfur armed movements who were on death row. That is a welcome development that we hope will contribute to affirming mutual trust between the Sudanese parties. SLA Abdul Wahid continues to refuse to join the peace process and seems to want to continue to fight. We would like to appeal to the Council and those with influence and leverage over him to persuade him to recognize the importance of a political settlement and to desist from bringing more suffering upon the very people that he professes to represent.

With regard to the implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, the 12th meeting of the Implementation Follow-up Commission was held on 6 March under the chairmanship of the State of Qatar. Efforts will continue towards improving coordination and mobilizing resources for the implementation of the remaining issues related to the Doha Document, particularly with the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs).

The past three months have also witnessed a continued reduction in the number of intercommunal security incidents, in particular as a result of the more effective involvement of the native administration and the impact of security measures taken by State Governments, leading to an increased number of peace agreements, the implementation of which is supported by UNAMID. Seasonal disputes over access to land and resources during the migration and farming season have nevertheless continued.

According to figures provided by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 97,400 people were newly displaced in 2016. Of those, approximately 39,600 have reportedly returned, including some 25,500 who were verified and assisted in Golo, the centre of Jebel Marra. An additional 99,400 people remain unverified. We have not seen any new displacement in 2017. IDPs continue to recquire UNAMID protection and humanitarian assistance on a daily basis. Durable solutions to enable their return to their places of origin or reintegration have to be identified and should be the main priority of our collective efforts.

The cooperation of the Government of the Sudan has noticeably improved. Although UNAMID experienced intermittent movement restrictions during the reporting period, there has been significant improvement in that regard. In addition, UNAMID and the United Nations country team have repeatedly been able to visit areas in Jebel Marra that were previously off-limits. Our United Nations humanitarian partners are commencing regular helicopter flights to Golo. UNAMID remains focused on efforts to work with authorities of the Government of the Sudan to overcome the remaining access challenges. We have also seen some improvement in the issuance of visas and the clearance of essential equipment. However, delays in the clearance of UNAMID goods and equipment remain a concern, with some shipments pending since 2015.

The African Union, the United Nations and the Government of the Sudan are actively discussing how best to configure a strategy for UNAMID to eventually leave Darfur as part of constructive discussions within the joint working group. On 26 February, the joint working group met in Khartoum and referred its conclusions to the strategic tripartite mechanism, which will meet later this month. From 5 to 17 March, UNAMID received an African Union-United Nations strategic review team, which met with the Government of the Sudan in Khartoum and Darfur and travelled throughout Darfur. UNAMID awaits the outcome of these deliberations. However, without necessarily prejudging the outcome of the strategic review, I should like to say that, in view of the current circumstances in Darfur, a pragmatic reconfiguration of UNAMID will become necessary, and the AU and the United Nations will have to focus on how best that could be done without compromising the gains made thus far.

In conclusion, I would like to express UNAMID's appreciation to the Council for the support we have received. We continue to count on it as we continue to implement the mandate given to us by the United Nations and the African Union.

The President: I thank Mr. Mamabolo for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to the Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): Allow me to begin by expressing my condolences to the representative of the Russian Federation for the terrorist attack in Saint Petersburg yesterday that caused such senseless loss of life.

I should also like to wish you, Madam President, all the very best for your month in the hot seat, and thank you for your kind words about last month.

I would also like to warmly welcome and congratulate the Joint Special Representative on his

appointment. I thank him for the briefing that he has just given us.

Darfur is at a crossroads. Down one path lies the continuation of 14 years of conflict, bloodshed and impunity. It is a path that has forced 2.6 million people from their homes. It is a path littered with persistent violations of international humanitarian law, human rights violations and abuses, and persistent sexual and gender-based violence. It is a path that Darfur has simply been on for too long.

But there is another road to take, and in recent months we have seen a welcome absence of violence between the Government of the Sudan and opposition groups. We have seen the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) being granted access to areas that were previously cut. Vital humanitarian assessments are now under way.

Today, therefore, we need to send a clear message to the Government of the Sudan: choose the right path. Choose the path that will improve the lives of the people of Darfur. Choose the path to sustainable peace. Thats means tackling the culture of criminality and the banditry in Darfur. It means ending the abundance of small arms and light weapons, which are only adding fuel to the fire. And it means bringing to justice, domestically and through the International Criminal Court, all those who have carried out violence and who have failed to respect international humanitarian law and human rights — no matter their allegiance or their links to the Government.

In truth, Darfur will remain unstable and unpredictable so long as the root causes of conflict remain unaddressed. Let us therefore all encourage the Government of the Sudan to use the current cessation in the violence to shift its effortrs away from counter-insurgency and towards building sustainable peace. They will need the support of the Security Council and of the international community as a whole as they do so.

The first step has to be political. A political agreement between the parties to the armed conflict would not only secure a permanent cessation of hostilities, it would also be a significant step in addressing the drivers of intercommunal violence. We therefore call upon all parties to the armed conflict to engage meaningfully with the African Union High-level Implementation Panel for the peace process in order to secure a political agreement.

The second step towards a long-term solution is long-term access to Darfur. In order for UNAMID to fulfil its mandated duty to protect civilians, the mission requires unfettered access throughout Darfur — not just for a few days, or even for a few weeks, but on a sustained basis. The recent access is welcome, but it will count for little if it is not maintained. We are concerned that security agents of the Government of the Sudan continue to impose unnecessary access restrictions on UNAMID. That is particularly troubling when the mission is prevented from accessing vulnerable populations of internally displaced persons and those most in need. Let us insist today that UNAMID be given unrestricted access throughout Darfur, in order to enable the mission to fulfil its mandate effectively.

That brings me to my final point. As penholder on UNAMID here in New York, we believe that, if there is to be sustainable peace in Darfur, UNAMID must evolve with the security situation. The strategic review will be crucial in that respect, and we welcome the help of the Government of the Sudan for the visit by the strategic review team to Darfur. We are encouraged that they could visit all five states, including areas previously denied, such as Golo and Nertiti in Jebel Marra.

However, if UNAMID is to be adapted, as we hope, we all need to be confident that the Government of the Sudan is willing and able to protect its civilians in areas where UNAMID's presence is altered. That requires more than just unfettered and reliable access; it requires the Government of the Sudan to commit to the principle of operational flexibility for UNAMID and to commit to improving its own ability to protect civilians.

In conclusion, until the Government and the parties to the conflict take those steps, Darfur will remain at that crossroads. The people of Darfur cannot afford a wrong turn. They have suffered for too long. It is incumbent upon us all to ensure that the path chosen is the right one, and the one that will improve the lives of civilians and lead to sustainable peace.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, Madam President, my delegation congratulates you and expresses its commitment to supporting you in your presidency of the Security Council. I also thank Ambassador Matthew Rycroft and the entire United Kingdom delegation for their outstanding presidency last month.

I also join others in expressing our condolences to our colleagues from the Russian delegation and to the

Government and the people of the Russian Federation in conneciton with the cowardly attack that took place yesterday in Saint Petersburg. We convey to them our full solidarity.

We thank Mr. Jeremiah Nyamane Kingsley Mamabolo, Joint Special Representative for the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), for presenting the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/250).

Uruguay would like to highlight the report's observations that there have been no significant armed clashes reported in Darfur for several months now and that, as compared with previous years, there have been fewer clashes between communities. It is important that the current calm in the armed conflict be maintained in order to halt violence against civilians and allow for conditions to emerge that are conducive to encouraging a secure environment for the voluntary return of internally displaced persons and communities.

We welcome the fact that the Government of the Sudan and the non-signatory movements to the Doha Document for Peace have maintained the unilateral ceasefire. We encourage them to resume direct talks, with a view to forging a formal agreement on the cessation of hostilities and humanitarian access, as well as to move swiftly towards political negotiations that can pave the way towards a lasting solution to the conflict.

I would like once again to underscore the key role played by UNAMID, in an operational environment that is far from free of difficulties. With regard to the issue of protecting civilians, we urge the mission to continue focusing on protecting internally displaced persons, who still number more than 2.6 million. We also urge it to concentrate on preventing and mediating local conflicts, including supporting reconciliation efforts and peace processes among the various communities.

With regard to the operational environment — from a systemic perspective — my colleagues on the Security Council will not be surprised to know that Uruguay is concerned any time that one State undertakes unilateral actions that interfere with the normal and proper functioning of a peacekeeping operation. In the specific case of UNAMID, we take note of the improvement in terms of issuing visas for staff and with regard to dispatching containers holding rations intended for UNAMID troops. Nevertheless, those are in fact obligations incumbent upon the State in order to facilitate the operation of the mission. We reiterate that, in line with the obligations assumed under the status-of-forces agreement, the Government of the Sudan must take the measures necessary to eliminate all bureaucratic impediments and to ensure that UNAMID has appropriate conditions in order to be able to fully comply with its mandate. That includes the points raised by the Ambassador of the United Kingdom: sustained, ununimpeded access to Darfur and all areas where the mission should be present.

In conclusion, allow me to convey Uruguay's gratitude to all UNAMID personnel, the United Nations country team on the ground and all humanitarian staff, who continue to work tirelessly, in often very difficult circumstances, in order to achieve lasting peace in Darfur.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): Let me start by congratulating you, Madam President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of April. I wish to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation. I would like to thank Ambassador Matthew Rycroft and his team for their very successful presidency. Much was achieved in March.

Before I proceed further, on behalf of my Government I would like very strongly to condemn the heinous and vicious terrorist attack in Saint Petersburg, as well as to express our solidarity with the people and the Government of the Russian Federation. We will always be second-to-none in our readiness to cooperate in the fight against this scourge. All can count on that.

I am very pleased to see our good friend and brother Ambassador Jeremiah Nyamane Kingsley Mamabolo, who did so much here at the United Nations when he was the Permanent Representative of his country. I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate him on his appointment as the new African Union-United Nations Joint Special Representative/Joint Chief Mediator for Darfur. I also thank him for his informative briefing. I would also like to express our appreciation to his predecessor for his notable contributions.

The situation in Darfur continues to show marked progress as was acknowledged in the reports of the Secretary-General and the Panel of Experts established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015). Indeed, no major fighting has been reported since the beginning of this year, and the security situation has significantly improved. We commend the Government of the Sudan for extending the unilateral ceasefire for an

additional six months. The Council should continue to exert pressure on the armed movements to negotiate seriously ending the suffering of the people of Darfur and holding the spoilers accountable. The leadership of Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid should also be called upon to join the peace process in earnest without preconditions.

Of course, we all recognize that much remains to be done in addressing the root causes of the conflict in Darfur and ensuring long-term stability. In that regard, we appreciate that the Government established the Darfur Peace Follow-up Office and took forward the implementation of Doha Document for Peace in Darfur. Addressing the challenge of internally displaced persons (IDPs) is vital to bringing lasting peace to Darfur, and we note the efforts that are being taken in that regard, including facilitating the voluntary repatriation of IDPs. It is important that those efforts be supported by the United Nations and the international community in general.

The National Dialogue process is indeed a step in the right direction. We note that the Government has begun implementing the National Dialogue document, and we welcome the appointment of Barki Hasan Saleh to the post of Prime Minister. Support for the implementation of the National Dialogue is critical for sustainable peace and security to prevail not only in Darfur but in the Sudan, in general. Those outside the National Dialogue process able to exercise leverage on the parties should exercise pressure on them so that they join the implementation phase. The Government should also be encouraged to remain committed to ensuring inclusivity.

With regard to the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), we note the improvements made in connection with visas and customs clearance. Furthermore, the revision of the directives and procedures for humanitarian action in the Sudan by the Humanitarian Aid Commission eased the regulations governing the delivery of humanitarian aid as indicated in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/250). It is our hope that all remaining challenges facing UNAMID operations will be resolved through taking advantage of the existing arrangements.

We appreciate the personal involvement of the Secretary-General in resolving the impasse between the Government of the Sudan and the Secretariat concerning the way forward in implementing the exit strategy. That led to the finalization of the report of the joint working group following the successful meeting that the group held in Khartoum on 26 February and the commencement of the joint African Union-United Nations report on the strategic review. We look forward to receiving the report that we expect will take into account the outcome of the aforementioned joint working group meeting.

Finally, the Sudan has been playing a constructive role in dealing with peace and security issues in the region. The relationship between the Sudan and South Sudan is improving. The Sudanese Government has opened humanitarian corridors to deliver assistance to South Sudan. Although there are still a number of outstanding issues, the improvement of relations between the Sudan and South Sudan is indeed a welcome development. In the same vein, the Sudan's improved relations with Chad and Uganda are also very encouraging. The facilitation roles played by Presidents Yoweri Kaguta Museveni and Idriss Deby Itno in support of the Sudan's peace efforts are a testament to the confidence that the Sudan has recently achieved in its relations with those countries, and we hope that that will make a positive contribution to peace and stability in the region.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate the delegation of the United States of America on its accession to the presidency of the Security Council for the month of April. We wish you, Madam, every success. We appreciate the work of the United Kingdom delegation and its effective presidency of the Council during the month of March. I thank Mr. Jeremiah Mamabolo, Joint Special Representative for the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), for his valuable briefing.

I would like to take this opportunity to offer the delegation of the Russian Federation our condolences and most vehement condemnation of the cowardly act of terrorism that claimed the lives of innocent civilians. We stand ready to support the Government and the people of the Russian Federation during this difficult time.

Over the past month, the situation on the ground in Darfur has seen major improvement, and security has improved. Our delegation has repeatedly stressed that the Security Council should change the way it addresses situation in Darfur to reflect those developments on the

ground. We should therefore focus on addressing the root causes of the conflict and seriously seek a final political settlement to the situation in the region that would ensure the humane and voluntary return of millions of internally displaced persons.

UNAMID has made outstanding efforts to establish peace in the region over the course of the years-long conflict. However, the Mission should not remain indefinitely without a deadline for the modification or termination of its mandate. That is impractical. We must achieve the formulation of a clear exit strategy for the Mission that corresponds with the improvement of the situation on the ground and the relative calm in Darfur. The Mission should focus on peacebuilding activities. In that regard, we reaffirm the role of the joint working group and the Tripartite Coordination Mechanism on Darfur as a main framework to explore the practical aspects of the exit strategy. At the same time, the improvement in the situation on the ground does not mean that challenges do not remain in the region.

Intercommunal violence and criminality, which are directly linked to the root causes of the conflict, must end. There must be reconciliation and the establishment of structures and institutions responsible for natural resources, as well as governance, economic and social development, the rule of law and the judicial system. UNAMID should focus on developing the region and rebuilding its institutions in cooperation with the United Nations country team.

On the political level, the necessary political support must be extended to the African Union High-level Implementation Panel chaired by former President Mbeki. Support must be given to the regional mediation efforts of the Justice and Equality Movement and the Sudan Liberation Army. The different channels of negotiation need to be coordinated so as to avoid any duplication or conflict in carrying out its work and optimize progress in that regard. Moreover, it is dangerous for the international community to overlook the intransigeance of a number of armed opposition factions that refuse to join the peace process, through refusing to sign the road map — in particular, the Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid faction. The Council must therefore shoulder its responsibility and seriously consider taking action against the leaders of the armed groups that are obstructing the political path and continue to refuse to join the political process.

In conclusion, Egypt reaffirms its support for UNAMID and the efforts of the Joint Special Representative, Mr. Jeremiah Mamabolo, to bring peace to Darfur.

Mr. Kawamura (Japan): At the outset, I would like to extend my hearty congratulations to you, Madam, on your country's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council during the month of April. Japan very much looks forward to working closely with you in the successful management of the Security Council.

I also express my deepest gratitude to Ambassador Rycroft for his splendid work at the helm of the presidency during the month of March. I join previous speakers in expressing our deepest condolences and sympathy to the people and Government of Russia, following the heinous terrorist attack that took place yesterday.

I thank Ambassador Jeremiah Kingsley Mamabolo for his informative briefing and congratulate him on his appointment as Joint Special Representative for Darfur and Head of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). Japan looks forward to continuing to work with him in his new capacity.

Japan is encouraged that there has been no major fighting in Darfur during the current reporting period. To avoid any relapse and to completely eliminate conflict, all parties must reach a permanent peace agreement based on the African Union High-level Implementation Panel road map. In that regard, we continue to support President Mbeki and the Joint Special Representative's good offices. We are also pleased with the Sudanese Government's improved cooperation with UNAMID and encourage further cooperation to enable the mission to implement its mandate with full freedom of movement. We understand that a new Government of National Reconciliation will soon be formed with the participation of a wider range of parties. The new Prime Minister of the Sudan stated that the new Government would make an effort to implement the outcome of the national dialogue. We strongly hope that the new Government will continue to play an active role in achieving more inclusive political participation.

Ongoing intercommunal violence should be addressed. Many of the root causes of that violence lie in conflict over resources such as water and land. We must support efforts made by the national and local Governments to address that issue, and we appreciate UNAMID's dedicated mediation and facilitation efforts. Japan, the African Union and UNAMID

recently completed a project to rehabilitate 100 natural water storage areas called rihoods. We believe that such projects can play an important role in addressing the root causes of conflicts.

We welcome the confirmation in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/250) that the humanitarian situation has improved in most of Darfur and that some progress has been observed in the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs). However, we must also recall the report of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs that there are still 3.7 million IDPs in Darfur. The problem is far from over. Support for the safe and voluntary return of IDPs should be prioritized with the utmost respect for the wishes of the IDPs. Japan believes that development assistance to consolidate peace in Darfur plays a major role in preventing the relapse into conflict and supporting the return of IDPs. To that end, we pledged an additional $4.3 million to United Nations agencies in January. It is particularly important that the people of Darfur experience peace directly.

There is no doubt that the situation in Darfur has improved, and the Council has the responsibility to review UNAMID's mandate accordingly. Japan looks forward to concrete recommendations after the strategic review on UNAMID's possible reconfiguration, as well as an assessment of progress and benchmarks. The time is right for the Council to reconsider how UNAMID can most effectively undertake vital tasks such as the protection of civilians, the safe and voluntary return of IDPs, the reduction of intercommunal violence and the strengthening of institutions and police capacity, in close coordination with the United Nations country team.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to congratulate you, Madam, on your country's assumption of the rotating presidency of the Security Council for this month. China looks forward to successful meetings of the Security Council under your leadership. I would also like to express our appreciation to the Ambassador of the United Kingdom and his team for their work during their presidency of the Council last month, and commend their efforts.

China strongly condemns yesterday's terrorist attack in Saint Petersburg that targeted civilians. We express our deepest sorrow about the lives lost. We extend our sincere condolences to the bereaved families and our best wishes to the injured. China is firmly against terrorism in all its forms. We stand in resolute support of Russia in combating terrorism and are ready to enhance counter-terrorism cooperation with the rest of the international community.

China thanks the United States of America for convening today's meeting. We have listened attentively to my good friend, Joint Special Representative Mr. Mamabolo. I would like to welcome Ambassador Mamabolo to his new capacity. China will actively support his work.

The current situation in Darfur is gradually improving. The Sudanese Government has announced a unilateral ceasefire in Darfur and made vigorous efforts to promote the peace process in an effort to maintain stability in Darfur and start reconstruction. China commends those efforts. The Darfur issue involves a multiplicity of factors such as the politicals security, development and humanitarian dimensions, and must be resolved in a comprehensive manner. Political settlement is both the foundation and the key. The international community must continue to support the mediation efforts of the African Union High Level Implementation Panel in order to provide immediate assistance to the Sudanese Government, the Darfur armed groups and opposition groups in implementing the road map agreement and resolve differences through dialogue so as to seek a sustained and peaceful settlement of the Darfur issue. We hope that relevant donors can actively honour their commitments and assist the Sudanese Government in enhancing infrastructure development in Darfur in order to improve local development capacity and achieve sustained economic and social development in the region.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of UNAMID's deployment. In the past 10 years, UNAMID has made tremendous efforts to promote the Darfur political process, maintain stability in Darfur and reconcile intercommunal differences. The United Nations, the African Union and the Sudanese Government hosted a joint working group meeting, which affirmed the progress achieved in the Darfur security situation and recommended the gradual withdrawal of UNAMID. China hopes that, while fully listening to the views of the Sudanese Government, the United Nations and the African Union can, on that basis, submit to the Council a report on a UNAMID drawdown.

The deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur is an innovative peace and security approach in Africa that was adopted

by the two parties. It provides enlightening guidance to the Council's approach to resolving flashpoint issues in Africa. It is now a consistent belief that the Security Council should support Africa in resolving African issues, the African way, by giving full play to the strength and role of the African Union and other regional and subregional organizations in Africa and, by carrying out results-based cooperation in relation to specific situations in Africa in order form a synergy. The United Nations peacekeeping operation must follow the changing dynamics and the will of the host country and adjust its mandate and size as appropriate. It will not just improve the mission's efficiency and efficacy; it can also concentrate limited peacekeeping resources on countries with greater needs in order to optimize resource allocation, in particular African countries, so as to provide tangible assistance in promoting peace and stability in Africa.

China has continued to support the Darfur peace process and is one of UNAMID's founding troop-contributing countries. The Chinese engineering unit was the first of the mission's peacekeeping troop contingents to arrive in Darfur to perform its duties. Over the years, it has made a sterling contribution to maintaining stability in Darfur and to developing the mission. China is ready to join the rest of the international community and continue to play a constructive role in restoring peace, stability and development in Darfur.

Mr. Sadykov (Kazakhstan): We would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of April, and to wish you every success. We are confident that under your leadership the Council will be able to make a breakthrough on many of the issues on its agenda.

We would like to express our heartfelt condolences to the delegation of the Russian Federation in the wake of yesterday's terrorist attack in Saint Petersburg. We want to convey our sympathy and sorrow to the relatives of the victims and wish those who were injured a speedy recovery.

We welcome the Joint Special Representative for Darfur and Head of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), Mr. Mamabolo, and we are very grateful to him for his briefing today in his new capacity. My delegation would like to make the following observations in support of the mission's commendable work.

With the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/250) reflecting the real situation on the ground and showing that there has been considerable improvement in the security and humanitarian situation in Darfur, we are pleased to see that the number of armed conflicts between Government forces and insurgents has fallen, with fewer incidents of intercommunal clashes compared to last year. In that regard, we commend the Government's declaration on 15 January extending the unilateral ceasefire for another six months. Kazakhstan supports the inclusive political process being organized under the leadership of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel and encourages every effort by all of the parties to fully implement the road-map agreement.

The decision to create a Government of National Reconciliation and a post of Prime Minister, as well as to reconstitute the composition of the National Assembly to make it more representative, is a step in the right direction. Respecting the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Sudan and the Government's ownership and leadership of the political process are crucial elements for establishing long-term peace and reconciliation in Darfur. We also commend the efforts of President Museveni of Uganda and President Deby Itno of Chad to resolve the crisis in Darfur, and we hope that the parties, including the United Nations, will benefit from their good offices.

Kazakhstan underscores the importance of the work of the tripartite group on the gradual drawdown of UNAMID and the transfer of its relevant functions to the United Nations country team. We welcome the general consensus that has been reached on the issue and hope that the so-called pending issues will be resolved by the next meeting. We have seen the important work being carried out by the joint strategic review mission, which visited Darfur from 15 to 17 March, to develop proposals for implementing UNAMID's exit strategy. Similarly, UNAMID's gradual reduction in personnel, based on the capability of the Government and the armed groups, should be conducted so as to ensure continued progress towards peace, and will require more effective and discerning spending of United Nations resources during the current period of economic stagnation. The report of the strategic review mission, which is expected in May, should give us more directives and reflect the relevant recommendations.

We also believe that the right-sizing of UNAMID should be implemented in parallel with the provision

of development assistance to the country, especially assistance in addressing the problems of internally displaced persons. We encourage donors to make good on their commitment to helping the vulnerable population through support to the development-peace nexus.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I would like to thank you, Madam President, and congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Council. We feel we are in very good hands. I would also like to thank Ambassador Rycroft and his excellent team for a very effective presidency last month. Like everyone else, I would like to express our sympathies and condolences to my Russian colleague and to the Russian people, as well as our strong condemnation of the attacks in Saint Petersburg yesterday.

It is very nice to see my friend Ambassador Kingsley Mamabolo back in the Chamber, and I would like to thank him for the work he is doing on the ground and for his briefing today.

Conflict and instability have stalked Darfur for more than 13 years. In that time, several million people have been displaced, many have lost their lives and many more have sought shelter in camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs), some for more than a decade. We now see a glimmer of hope. The consolidation of progress in some areas of Darfur, and the reports that the ceasefire is holding, is therefore very welcome. We now need to continue the steps towards consolidation and addressing the root causes of conflict.

Dialogue and diplomacy are the only guarantees of lasting peace and stability. The remaining armed groups, especially the Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid, must be persuaded to join the peace process. We should all support the efforts of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel and of President Mbeki and other key regional actors, including President Museveni and President Deby Itno, in that regard. In addition, we welcome the efforts to implement the conclusions of the National Dialogue and the preparations for forming a Government of National Reconciliation. That process must remain flexible and open to further input and adjustment as a comprehensive agreement is developed.

Regarding the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), we welcome the improvements in the Government of the Sudan's cooperation during the reporting period. We expect the remaining impediments to UNAMID's freedom of movement to be addressed as soon as possible. That is particularly important right now, as the Council needs a balanced assessment of the mission's effectiveness ahead of the renewal of its mandate in June. In order to ensure that the mission is appropriate to its context, the developments on the ground should be reflected in its next mandate. We welcome the fact that the Council will be able to consider input both from the strategic review and the joint working group when reviewing the mandate.

It is essential to take a holistic approach that addresses the current situation and longer-term development in Darfur, and it is therefore critical to ensure that the renewed mandate addresses how the United Nations as a whole can contribute to sustaining peace in the Sudan. The United Nations country team, together with UNAMID, must continue to identify areas where development cooperation can effectively and comprehensively address the root causes of instability, including through building effective institutions. It is important for UNAMID to have the capacity and the right operating conditions to enable it to focus on the remaining challenges, such as supporting the peace process, protecting civilians, addressing the situation of IDPs and monitoring, reporting on and advocating for the prevention of human rights violations.

We note with great concern the findings in the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/250) that human rights violations and abuses continue to be committed on a daily basis. We are particularly concerned about the 44 reported cases of sexual and gender-based violence, including cases involving children. In that regard, the joint efforts of UNAMID, the Office of the Resident Coordinator, the United Nations Development Programme and UN-Women to transfer tasks in the gender area from UNAMID to the United Nations country team are important. We encourage the United Nations system to continue addressing such issues and to report back, including in the light of the UNAMID mandate renewal.

We welcome the Government of the Sudan's continued commitment to implementing its action plan for ending and preventing the recruitment and use of children, and we encourage it to take the necessary measures to address the loopholes that have enabled the armed and security forces to recruit and use children.

Lastly, we need to be alert to tensions and challenges at the regional level, which are aggravated by drought and

refugee flows. We welcome the Sudan's recent positive engagement in South Sudan, including its facilitation of relief efforts by opening a second humanitarian corridor to the famine-stricken areas that will help to ensure that food assistance reaches those in need before the rainy season. It is also important to recognize that the Sudan itself is also feeling the effects of the drought. Lower than expected rainfall, exacerbated by the effects of the El Niño phenomenon, is resulting in food insecurity and water shortage across the greater region of the Horn of Africa. Addressing needs across borders will require a comprehensive regional approach that builds the resilience of individuals and communities throughout the region.

Mr. Lambertini (Italy): I would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of April. Of course, it is not the first ever United States presidency, but it is your first, so I wish you every success in what we hope will be a long list of successful presidencies of the Council. I would also like to thank Ambassador Rycroft and his team for their hard work in March during the brilliant British presidency. And I join others in expressing our condolences to the delegation of the Russian Federation in the wake of yesterday's senseless attack in Saint Petersburg. They can count on our Government's support.

It is a pleasure to welcome back Ambassador Mamabolo, whom we thank for his briefing and congratulate on his appointment as Joint Special Representative and Head of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). We are ready to work with him.

The situation in Darfur is changing rapidly and unevenly. Nevertheless, Italy's assessment of it remains clear and is based on three crucial aspects — the political and security dimensions; the root causes of instability in Darfur, starting with the humanitarian and human rights situations; and the strategic review of UNAMID.

First, with regard to the political and security dimension, in the past year the Sudanese Government has demonstrated its wish to find a political solution to the Darfur question, as attested to by the unilateral ceasefire and the pardoning of more than 250 rebels. This is further confirmed by Khartoum's signing of the road map and the willingness it has shown so far to negotiate with the non-signature parties on their association with the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur.

Despite the commendable efforts of President Thabo Mbeki, Head of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel, which Italy supports, the non-signatory groups continue to delay. We renew our invitation to the Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid to abandon military means and to join the political process, and we renew our call on the Sudan Liberation Army/Minni Minawi, the Justice and Equality Movement and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North to sign the road map.

The time has come to assess the credibility of those who claim support for peace on the basis of their broad commitment to the pacification of Darfur through peaceful means and for achieving political solution. The Government must also persist in the approach it is taking. We hope that the implementation of the Doha Document can be rapidly completed, which could send a clear signal in the right direction on the part of Khartoum — one that the Council could not ignore.

Secondly, with regard to the humanitarian and human rights situation, despite progress made at the military level, peace continues to evade Darfur. The root causes of the instability have not been addressed yet. This scenario is not helped by the ongoing impediments that UNAMID has to face, despite recent, positive measures by the Sudanese Government. Darfur suffers from a lack of development. In this regard, my country will continue to do its part, helping the Sudanese Government at the bilateral level, as well as through programmes of the European Union and the United Nations. But there are other areas where the Government is called upon to act without delay: inter-community conflicts; banditry; human rights violations, including gender-based violence and military use of schools; impunity and the lack of accountability; attacks on internally displaced persons, such as recent episodes at the Sortony Camp in northern Darfur. Italy stongly condemns these crimes. There can be no solution to the problems that foment instability in Darfur without an inclusive, conciliatory and constant action led by the Sudanese Government.

In closing, with regard to the strategic review of UNAMID, the recommendations, which will be delivered to the Council by May, will provide us with options to discuss the continuation or the exit strategy of the mission. The Sudan has demonstrated a

constructive spirit in breaking the impasse in the United Nations-African Union joint review process. We attach great value to the collaborative approach of the Sudan and its involvement in the exercise. We also thank the Secretary-General for his personal contribution in this regard.

While waiting to receive and carefully assess the recommendations, we take good note, with a spirit of openness, of the assessments made in the Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2017/250). Improvements still need to be made in the political, humanitarian, security and rule of law areas, while progress has been achieved in meeting the benchmarks for a future phased drawdown of the mission.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me to congratulate you, Madam President, as you begin your presidency of the Security Council. We wish you every success in this crucial role.

We would also like to express our gratitude for the solidarity shown in connection with the tragic events in Saint Petersburg yesterday. We appreciate the words of sympathy and support. The tragedy once again underscores the need for the international community to scale up its collective actions to counter the terrorist threat.

We thank Joint Special Representative Mr. Mamabolo for his briefing. We note the significant improvement in the security situation in Darfur. Not a single incident of clashes between the Government and the armed opposition was reported in any of the five states. At the same time, we are concerned about the ongoing intercommunal conflicts, rampant crime and attacks on internally displaced persons.

We welcome the measures taken by Khartoum to implement the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, which includes the demobilization and reintegration of combatants. We support the Government's plans to organize the voluntary surrender of weapons, to successfully conclude the work of the Darfur Regional Authority, to create the general office for Darfur and a number of specialized commissions. We hope that the outcome of the work of the National Dialogue conference will serve to ensure national consensus and resolve the conflicts in Darfur, as well as in other parts of the country.

We welcome the extension of the obligations under the cessation of hostilities by the Government and non-signatories of the Doha Document, as well as the reciprocal release of prisoners in March. At the same time, it is alarming that, despite the signing by the Government of the Sudan and the armed opposition of the Mbeki road map, the peace process remains at a standstill. The Government can hardly be blamed for this. It is no secret that the August negotiations in Addis Ababa on the cessation of hostilities and ensuring humanitarian access in conflict areas fell apart because of rebels, in particular those who supported the unacceptable conditions of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North for the direct provision of assistance from abroad. It is telling that even the guarantees by the United States representatives on the fair distribution of humanitarian assistance were rejected by this armed group. In addition, we recall that the leader of the movement, Abdul Wahid Mohamed al-Nour has categorically refused any dialogue with the Government.

We believe that the foreign sponsors of the Sudanese opposition should more forcefully urge their protégés to act in a constructive manner and to give up their unrealistic demands. Effective means of bringing pressure to bear on the intractable opposition exist. Many of these individuals regularly travel to and organize events in certain Western countries. It would be a good idea to think seriously about the introduction of Security Council sanctions against these intractable groups.

We think it is impossible to achieve a full settlement in Darfur without resolving the issues of the camps of internally displaced persons. We note with concern the increase in crime in two of the largest camps, Sortony and Kalma. Furthermore, among the internally displaced persons, there are many supporters of the radical opposition and they are well armed. As members know, the Sudanese police do not have access to camps and the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) does not have a mandate to conduct relevant activities there. As a result, robbers, murderers and rapists go unpunished, and representatives from the Hybrid Operation risk their own lives to protect one of the parties to the conflict. We should think about how this situation could be rectified.

We note breakthroughs in resolving the problems facing UNAMID, including the issuance of visas and customs clearance for contingent-owned equipment. Progress has also been made in granting access. It is our understanding that the Government of the

Sudan is approving the vast majority of requests and negative responses are being given only when there is a security threat to staff. In the case of incidents with peacekeepers, blame could be laid only on Khartoum.

Recently, humanitarian workers were able to visit some areas of Jebel Marra. The Government issued new directives on procedures for humanitarian assistance to facilitate the movement of humanitarian staff. These aspects must be considered when coordinating with Khartoum. We also welcome the Government's decision to open new humanitarian corridors from El Obeid to the South Sudan area of Bentiu.

The work of the Tripartite Coordination Mechanism is helping to clear the obstacles to UNAMID. We call upon UNAMID and the Secretariat to continue this cooperation in order to dispel any remaining disagreements. With the positive trend in Darfur, we think the issue of the drawdown strategy of UNAMID is all the more relevant.

Progress in developing a UNAMID exit strategy also determines its relationship with the host country. Attempts to impede this process, let alone using UNAMID to put pressure on Khartoum, is unacceptable. Indeed, peacekeepers could be hostage to this type of political game. In this regard, we note the holding in early March of a joint strategic review of the mission's activities, conducted with the Secretariat and the African Union. We are pleased that this event was coordinated with the activities of the specialized joint working group. We stand ready to consider the proposals in the joint report of the Secretariat and the African UNion Commission for adapting the mission given the changing situation on the ground.

Mr. Lamek (France) (*spoke in French*): I, too, would like to begin by congratulating you, Madam President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. You can count on the full support of the French delegation. I would also like to pay tribute to the excellent manner in which the United Kingdom presided over the Council during the month of March.

I also wish to join others at this very difficult time in condemning the terrorist attack that took place in Saint Petersburg yesterday. As my President did yesterday, I too express our solidarity with the Russian people.

I also wish to thank Joint Special Representative Kingsley Mamabolo for his briefing, as well as to congratulate him on his appointment to the helm of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). My delegation wishes him every success in his new post. He can count on our continued and determined support.

This July it will have been 10 years since the Security Council established African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, which took over from the African Union Mission in the Sudan with the task of helping to restore peace and stability in Darfur following the atrocities that took place in the region in the early 2000s.

The Council must regularly assess the results of the operations it deploys. It is in that spirit that I visited the Sudan last week. I thank the Sudanese authorities for their welcome, and UNAMID for its support. The meetings I conducted in Khartoum and El Fasher, as well as visits to two camps in Darfur for displaced persons, were very useful for me to better understand the complex reality of the region, which the Sudanese authorities, along with UNAMID, face today.

My visit to the Sortony camp in particular enabled me to better understand the challenges in protecting civilians in Darfur. There has clearly been a decrease in the level of violence in some areas of Darfur, as noted in the recent reports of the Secretary-General. The decline in the intensity of fighting between rebel groups and Government forces is obviously encouraging news, and we welcome the decision made by the Sudanese Government in January to extend the ceasefire by six months. We again call on the rebel groups to do the same.

What is striking is that the displaced persons who found refuge at Sortony, in the foothills of Jebel Marra, are now facing a different sort of threat. Following the aerial bombardments in January 2016, and in the face of attacks by armed groups and militias, people had to flee their villages, settling around a UNAMID camp in a valley. The vast majority of them tell us they want to return to their lands but cannot because they are harassed by members of the militias and armed groups, who continue to commit abuses against civilians who leave the camp. On far too many occasions, women fall victim to rape as they collect firewood. As some of the displaced persons said clearly, they would have died if they had not been able to find refuge near the UNAMID camp. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the men and women of UNAMID who are

implementing the mandate to protect civilians. Their work is decisive in a place like Sortony. The more than 20,000 displaced persons in Sortony represent only a small percentage of the 2.6 million displaced people in Darfur. With a population of 7 million, that means one out of three people in Darfur are displaced. What we are seeing and hearing in Sortony should lead us to reflect on what action the United Nations should take on the ground.

The challenge in terms of security and protecting civilians from the armed groups and militias is certainly one of the main challenges faced by the Government of the Sudan and UNAMID. The return of displaced persons to their villages will be possible only when their security is assured in those areas. The Government of the Sudan must fully play its role in that regard, in accordance with its primary responsibility for protecting civilians, as has been consistently reaffirmed by the Council and earlier this morning by the Joint Special Representative. The international community, through UNAMID, can be a partner in that effort. To do so, UNAMID must be able to operate under good conditions. It must be able to benefit from the sound cooperation of the Sudanese Government in the exercise of its mandate.

During my visit, it became clear that the stability of Darfur, and more broadly that of the region, requires addressing the root causes of instability. We have all spoken of this in our statements up until now, but I wish to recall that among the causes are the proliferation of weapons, the plight of displaced persons, the handling of the issue of land and natural resources, the need to strengthen the rule of law and, of course, combating impunity, whether at the local and national levels or at the international level through the International Criminal Court. The country team contributes to promoting development in Darfur, often under difficult conditions, but it is clear that it cannot be the only partner of the Sudanese authorities in responding to these complex challenges.

From my discussions with the Sudanese authorities, both in Khartoum and El Fasher, and with the displaced and UNAMID, disarmament emerged as one of the most important current challenges. There is in fact a proliferation of weapons in Darfur. It is said that there are as many weapons in Darfur as there are inhabitants. Again, the international community can partner with Sudanese authorities to take a step in the right direction where the issue of disarmament is concerned. We therefore need to move forward in our collective thinking in order to find solutions that respond to these challenges.

We are committed to the effectiveness of United Nations peacekeeping, which is an essential tool for maintaining international peace and security. In view of the evolving challenges in Darfur, UNAMID will certainly need to evolve to provide the best response. In that context, we support the initiative of the Secretariat and of the African Union Commission to conduct a strategic review of UNAMID. That work should assess the effectiveness of UNAMID with regard to its goal of contributing to sustainable peace and stability in Darfur. We therefore look forward to the recommendations that will be made by the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, which will be based on the review assessment. It is on that basis that we can consider what adjustments can be made to UNAMID to allow it best to respond to the current peace and security challenges in Darfur.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): I wish to offer my best wishes to you, Madam Presidenet, as you take on the crucial role of Security Council President. I would also like to convey my very special thanks to Ambassador Rycroft and his team for the excellent way they conducted business doing the eventful month of March.

I would also like to express my condolences to the families of the victims of the terrorist attack that took place yesterday in Saint Petersburg.

I join others in congratulating Mr. Jeremiah Kingsley Mamabolo on his appointment as Joint Special Representative for Darfur. Ukraine fully supports his efforts aimed at advancing the achievement of peace in the Sudan. In the light of the information presented during Mr. Mamabolo's briefing, my delegation wishes to highlight the following points.

First, Ukraine welcomes the fact that the security situation in most parts of Darfur remained stable over recent months. Although no major fighting between Government forces and rebel groups has been observed as of late, attacks against internally displaced persons committed by armed militias continue to occur and must be halted immediately. We hope that the unilateral ceasefire declared by the Government of the Sudan and the non-signatory movements to the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur will continue to hold. We also call on the Abdul Wahid faction of the Sudan Liberation Movement Army to refrain from military activity and

to join the peace talks. In that vein, we expect that all parties will continue to undertake genuine efforts aimed at preserving the positive momentum with a view to resolving critical issues related to the safe return of internally displaced persons and the renewal of peace talks.

That brings me to my second point, on the political process. There has been visible progress on the political track. The endorsement of amendments to the Constitution and the establishment of the Government of National Reconciliation and the post of Prime Minister, as well as the separation of the posts of Attorney-General and the Minister of Justice, are steps in the right direction. My delegation also notes the positive engagement by the Government and the Sudan Liberation Movement-North, which resulted in the mutual release of respective prisoners of war. We urge the Sudanese Government and the opposition parties to continue to implement the recommendations of the National Dialogue. Ukraine also looks forward to the resumption of talks facilitated by the African Union High-level Implementation Panel.

My third, and last, point is on the African Union-United Nations (UNAMID). Given that the situation in Darfur has evolved since 2015, we believe that the current mandate and tasks of UNAMID deserve close consideration. We look forward to the conclusions of the strategic review that was conducted by the joint African Union-United Nations team last month. The key priority in that regard should be to ensure the gradual transfer of tasks from UNAMID to the United Nations country team in the framework of peacebuilding efforts in Darfur. Meanwhile, we are concerned by continued restrictions and impediments to UNAMID's work, which include delays in the clearance of containers with equipment and supplies for the mission, as well as denial of access into some parts of Darfur. We call on the Government of the Sudan to remove these restrictions in line with its obligations under the status-of-forces agreement.

Finally, as Chair of the Sanctions Committee established pursuant to resolution 1591 (2005), concerning the Sudan, I remain committed to continuing to engage closely with the Government of the Sudan on issues within my mandate. I recognize the positive and constructive role in that regard played by the delegation of the Sudan in New York.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, Madam President, my delegation wishes to congratulate the United States on assuming the presidency of the Security Council this month. We wish you every success and pledge our cooperation. I would like also thank and congratulate the delegation of the United Kingdom and Ambassador Rycroft for having led the Council in March.

At the outset, Bolivia offers its most sincere condolences to the people and the Government of the Russian Federation for yesterday's terrorist attack in Saint Petersburg. As stated by President Evo Morales Ayma, Bolivia emphatically condemns that cowardly terrorist act, which claimed the lives of many and injured dozens. We convey our sympathy to the families of the deceased and wish the injured a speedy recovery.

My delegation warmly welcomes the appointment of Mr. Jeremiah Kingsley Mamabolo as Joint Special Representative for the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and the African Union-United Nations Joint Chief Mediator. We have witnessed the leadership and professionalism of Ambassador Mamabolo, not only as his country's Permanent Representative to the United Nations but also when he was President of the Group of 77 and China in this Organization.

I should like to make the following brief comments.

Bolivia welcomes the good news that the situation in Darfur has taken a positive turn. As the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2017/250) indicates, there have been no serious conflicts over the past three months and hostilities in the Jebel Marra region have diminished considerably. We welcome the fact that the Government of the Sudan, the signatory movements to the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur as well as non-signatory movements have all upheld the ceasefire. We urge the leaders of the non-signatory movements, especially the Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid faction, to join the negotiations under way and work on a formal agreement that shows their commitment to stability and peace in Darfur.

In that connection, we encourage the efforts of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel, represented by former Presidents Thabo Mbeki and Abdulsalami Abubakar, to advance the peace process in Darfur. In that regard, we also take note of the steps taken by the Presidents of Uganda and Chad to foster

dialogue among the parties. Regional cooperation is fundamental to the political process.

Similarly, we would like to highlight the decrease in intercommunal violence. We recognize the efforts of the Government and UNAMID to promote understanding and reconciliation in order to reduce tensions between members of those communities. Nevertheless, despite such improvements, the situation of internally displaced persons remains a great concern. According to the Secretary-General's report, their number has not decreased. There are approximately 2.6 million people exposed to some form of violence, of which women and children are the most vulnerable and the most seriously affected.

We must support the plan of the Government of the Sudan for the voluntary resettlement of internally displaced persons. In that connection, we trust that the Government, consistent with the progress it has shown, will ensure the necessary support so that UNAMID can freely carry out its mandate of guaranteeing the necessary access to humanitarian actors so that they can verify and deliver humanitarian assistance.

As for the exit strategy and the transfer of UNAMID tasks to the United Nations country team, we welcome the efforts of the joint working group, whose recommendations, we believe, can be key in the joint African Union-United Nations report on the strategic review of UNAMID, to be submitted in May.

We also highlight the Sudanese Government's solidarity in alleviating the humanitarian crisis in South Sudan by opening up a humanitarian aid corridor from central Sudan to northern South Sudan, particularly in the areas of greatest conflict, such as Upper Nile and Bahr El Ghazal states.

Finally, my delegation pledges its support to the work of UNAMID and the United Nations country team with a view to achieving the main goal of lasting and sustainable peace in Darfur. We reiterate that the work and efforts of the Council must respect the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Sudan.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, as my Government did yesterday morning, I would like to echo my delegation's firm condemnation of the terrorist attack in Saint Petersburg, which resulted in many deaths, numerous injuries and considerable property damage. Our sympathy, solidarity and condolences go out to the families of the victims and to the Government and the people of Russia. Senegal echoes the appeal just made by the Chargé d'affaires of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation for greater and more coordinated voluntary mobilization in the fight against terrorism, whoever its perpetrators.

On behalf of the delegation of Senegal, Madam President, I warmly congratulate you on your accession to the presidency of the Security Council. I assure you of our full cooperation. I also thank you, Madam President, for having convened this meeting on the important issue of Darfur. I also thank and congratulate Mr. Matthew Rycroft and his entire team for an active and productive presidency during the month of March. I am very pleased to see my dear friend and colleague Mr. Mamabolo, former Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations and current Joint Special Representative for the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). His concise and clear briefing shed light on the situation, as did the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/250) and the report of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan established pursuant to resolution 1591 (2005) (see S/2017/22).

Senegal wishes to pay well-deserved tribute to UNAMID, which has teams on all fronts in Darfur working to tackle the security challenges, support the political process and facilitate access to humanitarian aid. We also pay tribute to the troop-contributing countries for their commitment to peace in Darfur. I should recall that Senegal has deployed 800 military troops, two 140-person police units, eight observer officials and eight police officers — a total of 1,096 people.

As for the security situation, the delegation of Senegal welcomes the fact that the Government and several armed groups are respecting the ceasefire and the cessation of hostilities, with the notable exception of the Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid faction. Such confidence-building measures must be commended and strengthened. Although there continue to be sporadic intercommunal clashes, their intensity, on the whole, has diminished.

The Senegalese delegation nonetheless wishes to deplore the numerous human rights violations reported in Darfur, which target in particular internally displaced persons (IDPs), women and children. We call for the voluntary and secure return of IDPs, which requires a safe environment and a long-lasting commitment by all parties to reconciliation and recovery. In that context,

my delegation welcomes the holding of the national dialogue and encourages the effective implementation of the recommendations arising therefrom so that the Government and the opposition can reach a common understanding so as to bring about a lasting solution to the conflict and a lasting peace.

Concerning the relationship between UNAMID and the Sudanese Government, we welcome the progress that has been made with regard to the issuing of visas and the releasing of containers, particularly those containing food rations. That is thanks to the efforts of the Sudanese authorities, which have, inter alia, appointed a focal point who will bear responsibility for these issues. That said, some containers remain held up in Port Sudan, which leads to difficulties for troop-contributing countries, my own included, in importing spare parts for key equipment. In order to alleviate this situation, we call for greater cooperation on the part of the Sudanese authorities so that these containers can be released.

With regard to transferring UNAMID tasks to the United Nations country team and the handover process, we look forward to seeing the joint report of the African Union and the United Nations on the strategic review that is under way, in particular as concerns ways of reconfiguring UNAMID, bearing in mind the positive evolution of events on the ground. It is in that spirit that the delegation of Senegal reiterates its support and extends once again its congratulations to UNAMID, to the United Nations country team and to the humanitarian personnel involved for the outstanding work they are doing in order to usher in lasting peace in Darfur.

It would be remiss of me to conclude without commending the work that the African Union High-level Implementation Panel is doing to promote the political process by facilitating direct, inclusive negotiations. We pay tribute to their outstanding mediator, President Thabo Mbeki — Mr. Mamabolo's compatriot — who held a very fruitful interactive dialogue with the Security Council last February, under the Swedish presidency.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United States.

I wish to thank Joint Special Representative Mamabolo for his update on the activities of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). The Darfur mission was a lifeline when its peacekeepers deployed 10 years ago. In 2007, Darfur was one of the most brutal places on Earth. After four years of violence, more than 200,000 people were already dead, and 2.4 million people had fled their homes. Many people were stuck in refugee camps, petrified that Government-backed militias would murder them if they ventured out. The world looked to the Security Council to save lives. The mission answered the call.

The mission was never perfect; it was by far the most complex and most expensive peacekeeping mission in United Nations history, and the Sudanese Government has tried to obstruct it from day one. But against all of these odds, the mission has helped to protect civilians. Its peacekeepers deployed with great courage and bravery, and 63 UNAMID troops and police have paid the ultimate price. The United States is deeply grateful for the sacrifices that all of the mission's troop and police contributors have made.

But 10 years after the Darfur mission began its work, it is time to consider where Darfur stands today and what comes next. The Sudanese Government is still failing to protect its people in Darfur. In some areas, civilians are still at grave risk of widespread violence from Government-backed militias and armed groups. In other places, the Government does almost nothing to provide security when local disputes turn bloody.

The Council needs to see the Sudanese Government do far more to provide for its people by meeting the agreed-upon benchmarks for Darfur, supporting an inclusive peace process, protecting civilians and preventing community violence. It is not enough for the Government to promise to do better; we need to see proof.

It is also disheartening that the Sudanese Government is still obstructing the mission after all of these years. Over the past year, the Government held back hundreds of shipping containers of food, and the Darfur mission is still waiting for no fewer than 182 containers of its equipment to be released.

It is true that the Sudan has started processing United Nations paperwork faster and that it has improved humanitarian access for the United Nations and its partners. We welcome those changes. But the Government is not doing enough. The Government must grant freedom of movement to all peacekeepers and all aid workers. The Government must release all of the mission's equipment. It also has to grant visas for all United Nations officials, including human rights staff.

These are all demands the Council has made many times before. Council members need to stand by them.

Our long-term goal for Darfur is still the same: a negotiated, lasting peace. The United States welcomes the fact that both the Government and opposition groups have announced unilateral ceasefires. Both sides now need to turn these ceasefires into real progress towards peace talks, based on the road map that the African Union High-level Implementation Panel has laid out. We call on the Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid to immediately declare a unilateral cessation of hostilities and join the negotiations.

We also need to look at the Darfur mission's future. The situation in Darfur is still far from what we had hoped it would be 10 years ago, but Darfur today is changing. In many areas, the immediate threat of violence from Government confrontations with the armed opposition has passed. The people need the rule of law; they need police who will respect their human rights and protect them from criminals and militias; and they need help to mediate local disputes so that they do not flare up and spread.

So as the situation changes, the tools to prevent violence must change too. We need to ask if the mission to Darfur's current force structure and size are still appropriate. We might not need 17,000 uniformed troops to tackle these challenges. We need the United Nations to start using new tools, and we need the Government of the Sudan to step up.

So UNAMID should review its mission to ensure it still matches the conditions on the ground. This includes how the mission can reposition its forces to stop recurring violence and to quickly get to the areas where people need the help the most.

The mission's restructuring will also require the Sudanese Government to show that it is ready to govern all areas of its territory and protect all of its citizens. The Government will need to work with the United Nations as a partner to build local institutions and to provide basic services.

We have the benchmarks, so we need to assess the Government's progress based on them and be honest in our evaluation. If the Government believes that it is ready to govern, it needs to show us. The expectations are well known. We need progress on an inclusive peace process. Civilians must be protected and humanitarian access unhindered, and we need to see conflict within communities addressed through mediation.

For each one, we expect that the Secretary-General's reports will clearly spell out where Sudan meets these benchmarks and where it does not, and we expect that all of us on the Council will be just as diligent in tracking that progress. If the Government falls short, the Council has a responsibility to act. The Council has to be willing to criticize and call out the Government in our statements and when we review the peacekeeping mission's mandate, in June.

Helping the people of Darfur means that we need to see change. Above all, the responsibility rests with the Sudan's Government. We can and should reconfigure the mission to Darfur to make it more effective, but what will really bring peace to Darfur is holding the Government accountable. The Sudan's leaders must disarm the militias that still terrorize Darfur's people. They must support United Nations peacekeepers and staff in accomplishing their missions, and they must commit not just in words but in deeds to building sustainable peace for Darfur's people. I look forward to working with all participants in the coming months to help bring about these changes.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Mohamed (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like at the outset to express my condolences to the Government and the people of the Russian Federation in connection with the terrorist act in Saint Petersburg and to condemn this cowardly act in the strongest terms.

I would like to congratulate you, Madam, on your appointment to the position of Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations and for your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council during the month of April. I assure you of my delegation's readiness to cooperate with you, Madam President, to carry out your presidency's mandate. Furthermore, I would like to express our thanks and appreciation to the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom for his delegation's outstanding presidency of the Security Council during last month. I also thank the Secretary-General for his substantial report (S/2017/250). And I congratulate Ambassador Mamabolo on his appointment to the position of Joint

Special Representative for the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). We stand in full agreement with his briefing on the situation in Darfur, as the Darfur of today is not the Darfur of 2003. Moreover, I commend the high level of cooperation between peacekeeping management and UNAMID, on one hand, and the Government of the Sudan, on the other hand. Such is the level of cooperation to which we have been aspiring over past reporting periods, and especially since 2007.

The report of the Secretary-General underscores the progress achieved in Darfur during the latest reporting period and notes the unprecedented stability in terms of security owing to the efforts of Government forces to securing the state of Darfur and ending clashes attributable to certain armed movements. That has had a positive impact on the situation in terms of security and stability in the various states of Darfur, with the exception of a few enclaves in the country. In the report, we note that the Jebel Marra is mostly secure, except for a few pockets in which remnants of the rebel faction of Abdul Wahid are positioned. The adhesion of many of the leaders of that movement to the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur was of great importance.

Owing to the efforts that were carried out by the Government and regional partners, a number of the opposition factions became signatories to the Doha Document. The Government's six-month extension of the ceasefire demonstrated its serious intentions to revive the peace process and end violence in that area of the country and begin rebuilding and development. In all our statements addressed to the Security Council, we have reiterated the determination of the Government of the Sudan to revive peace throughout the country. Furthermore, we have stressed that it is very important that the international community exert pressure on the opposition movement, as it obstinately continues to refuse to sign the peace agreement despite defections. The leader of the rebel movement, Abdul Wahid, continues to receive support, which only serves to encourage his intransigence and refusal to sign the peace agreement. That disadvantages other movements and prevents them from seriously negotiating a lasting peace and ending human trafficking and mercenary activities. All of those points were mentioned in the report by the Panel of Experts established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) in February.

With regard to internally displaced persons (IDPs), we should acknowledge that the movement of all the IDPs in 2016 — I am happy to say that we have not witnessed any IDP movement in 2017 — was the result of Abdul Wahid's determination and insistence to resort to armed violence.

The humanitarian situation in Darfur is a major concern for the Government of the Sudan, not to speak of the increasing number of returning IDPs. Moreover, the continuing presence of IDP camps in Darfur following the breakthrough in peace, stability and security is unjustifiable, especially as the peace partners in Darfur have made considerable efforts to prepare and equip villages for their voluntary return, through providing all their basic needs as well as restoring security in the IDPs' villages of origin. International efforts therefore should continue to encourage IDPs to voluntarily return, and the Government of the Sudan developed a plan based on three options. The first option involves the voluntary return of IDPs to their villages — and I stress the word "voluntary". The second option is to integrate IDP camps into neighbouring cities after ramping up their latter's capability to provide them with basic needs and services. The third option provides IDPs with the freedom to choose the area in which they would like to be relocated, especially in Darfur.

The implementation of any one of those options lacks the financial resources and the technical expertise, as well as the international community's cooperation. Again, it requires the cooperation of it international community. In that regard, I would like to commend the assistance offered by Qatar, the Leauge of Arab States and other friendly countries ,such as China, Japan and others in the framework of the Doha Document, which was front and centre as the primary document recognized by the Security Council. We must reiterate that the Document is critical to peace, and we are not here to call for a new agreement. However, we must make every effort to commit to the Document, which is at the core of the peace process that was initiated by the Security Council. We call for the implementation of the Doha Document, which should be followed up by the establishment of an international commission including the Security Council members and the peace partners.

If the implementation of Doha Document fails, any such failure should therefore be referred to the committee that meets every six months. That is one of the very positive points that we found in the Document. It also provides a window of time for the international community to follow up on developments every six months. Accordingly, I also refer members of the

Council to all the recommendations of the committee. The committee meets every six months in Khartoum and Doha.

The significant improvement in the security and humanitarian situation in Darfur and the reduction of activity by the rebel groups, as mentioned in the Secretary-General's latest and previous reports, as well as the report (see S/2017/22) by the Panel of Experts established pursuant to resolution 1591 (2005), serve to underscore that what the Government of the Sudan had been calling for since 2014 was justified, namely, the need to establish a strategic plan to phase out UNAMID in Darfur. Moreover, developments in the situation demonstrate daily that UNAMID is no longer the appropriate framework for security engagement by the international community, because our main focus — especially with regard to Darfur — should now be on development. I recall that the Sudan — or, rahter, Darfur — is a least developed country. We must realize the need for inclusive development, including its economic, social and environmental dimensions. In that regard, we refer to the important role that should be played by the international community on the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of the former combatants. All of those tasks could be undertaken by the United Nations country team, as long as the international community provides the necessary financial and humanitarian assistance.

My country's delegation hopes that the recommendations put forward at the most recent meeting of the joint working group, held on 26 February, will be considered in order to develop a strategy for the phasing out of UNAMID — a gradual exit strategy. That should serve as an example for other United Nations peacekeeping operations.

The Sudan has consolidated its regional and international partnerships in areas of vital importance for the international community, in particular counter-terrorism, illegal immigration, regional peace efforts and humanitarian assistance. You, Madam President, are also aware of how far the cooperation between the Sudan and your own country has come. As I speak here before the Security Council, my country is hosting a conference for African directors of intelligence services on counter-terrorism efforts on the African continent.

With regard to humanitarian issues, the Sudan has continued to cooperate with the international community. The Government of the Sudan agreed to a proposal that was made by the United States regarding humanitarian access to South Kordofan and Blue Nile states. That same proposal, however, was refused by the rebels. The Sudan has also consolidated its role in providing relief to South Sudan.

All of those developments prove that the Sudan is an effective member of the international community and a reliable partner. It is therefore incumbent upon the international community to cooperate with the Sudan.

Finally, we would like to thank UNAMID for its efforts in the various areas. We would also like to thank the troop- and police-contributing countries. We reiterate the readiness of the Government of the Sudan to cooperate with all regional and international partners on the UNAMID mission, until the very last UNAMID components leave the Sudan after completing their mandate. Peacekeeping missions should not be deployed indefinitely. If the mandate is finalized, it means that peace has been restored.

The President: Before concluding, I would like to say that we all stand unified in our sympathy for the people of Russia following the attack on Saint Petersburg. We stand with the families and hope that we can find those who perpetrated that heinous act. We support them through that process.

We have all seen the reports of the terrible chemical-weapon attack in Syria. In my capacity as President, I would like to inform the Security Council that the presidency intends to convene a meeting in briefing format here, in open Chamber, tomorrow at 10 a.m. to discuss the attack. We will move our briefing and consultations on Colombia to the afternoon so that we can hold that emergency meeting. We hope to get as much information on the Syrian attack as we can.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.